Winter Blooms in Brussels

performing the miraculous at St Dorothea's flower festival, c. 1640-60

Nagelsmit, Eelco

Published in:
Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the history of art

Publication date:
2016

Document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Nagelsmit, E. (2016). Winter Blooms in Brussels: performing the miraculous at St Dorothea's flower festival, c. 1640-60. *Simiolus: Netherlands quarterly for the history of art*, *38*(3), 159-172.

Winter blooms in Brussels: performing the miraculous at St Dorothea's flower festival, c. 1640–60*

Eelco Nagelsmit

On 6 February 1640 the first annual flower festival in honor of St Dorothea was held in the church of the Calced Carmelites in Brussels.[1] Organized by the church's newly established confraternity of St Dorothea, the sacred festival commemorated the first female Christian martyr, who was venerated as the patron saint of flower cultivation.[2] The occasion was marked by the installation on the high altar of an impressive new retable with paintings by Gaspar de Crayer depicting Dorothea's martyrdom and glorification. In addition, the chancel was temporarily transformed by a multitude of flowers, artificial and real, alluding to her miracle of having summoned flowers from heaven in the middle of winter, just before her martyrdom. The sight and smell of these flowers in winter, achieved by manipulating nature through advanced horticultural techniques and greenhouses, astonished the spectators and evoked a sense of wonder. The feast drew large numbers of the pious to the Carmelite church, and around 1640 the Spanish Netherlands witnessed the sudden emergence of St Dorothea in paintings, prints, literature, poetry and plays.[3] In the next two decades, apparently inspired by the Brussels example, confraternities were founded and flower festivals held in her honor in major cities throughout the Spanish Netherlands.[4]

The Carmelite church and its many artworks did not survive the French bombardment of Brussels in 1695,[5] but the appearance of its high altar on the feast of St Dorothea is preserved in visual sources, such as a splendid engraving of 1640 (fig. 1), and the feast of 1659 was described poetically by the canon and historian Antonius Sanderus in his 1660 *Chorographia* of the friary.[6] However, most of the archival documents on the altar and confra-

* This article is based on a chapter of my dissertation, *Venite & videte: art and architecture as agents of change in Brussels during the Counter-Reformation, c. 1609–1659*, Leiden & Ghent 2014, entitled "The Calced Carmelites and the legitimate use of images." The research was funded by FWO Vlaanderen and the European Research Council. I should like to thank my advisors Caroline van Eck and Maarten Delbeke for their tutoring, and Sarah Moran and the editors of this journal for their comments and suggestions, as well as all others who shared their thoughts with me.

1 N. de Poorter, "Verloren werk van De Crayer en Rubens van naderbij bekeken: de altaarschilderijen van de Brusselse Lieve-Vrouwebroeders," in K. van der Stighelen (ed.), *Munuscula amicorum: contributions on Rubens and his context in honour of Hans Vlieghe*, 2 vols., Turnhout 2006, vol. 2, pp. 311–29.

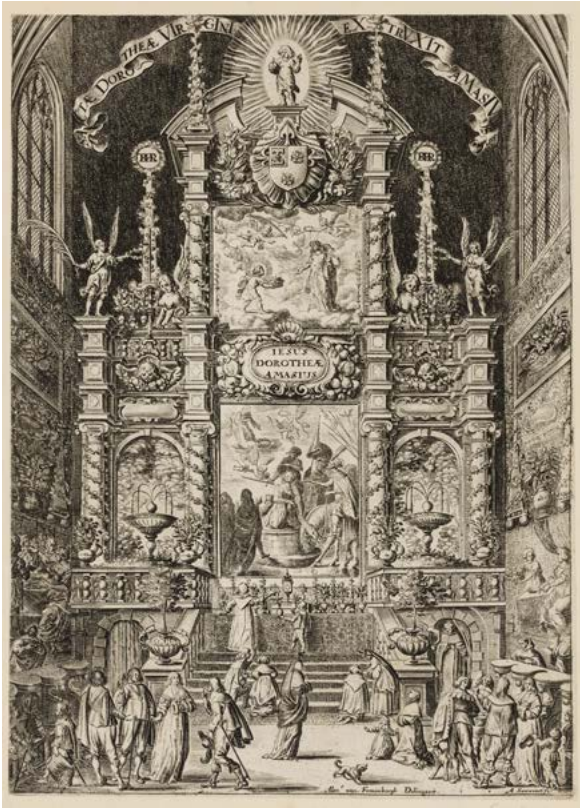
2 In 304 AD, under the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian, the virgin Dorothea of Caesarea was supposedly decapitated at the age of 12, which gave her the honor of being the first female Christian martyr. She has been venerated as a patron saint of gardeners since the middle ages. The story of her martyrdom was regularly recounted in collections of lives of the saints and depicted in altarpieces, especially in the Netherlands and Germany. E. Wimmer and G. Binding, "Dorothea," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Munich 1986, vol. 3, pp. 1318–319.

3 See Nagelsmit, op. cit. (note *), ch. 2.

4 Antwerp, 1641; Ghent, 1647/48; Bruges, 1651. The tradition lives on to this day in the form of the quinquennial flower exhibitions of the Floraliën in Ghent, for various confraternities of St Dorothea were turned into horticultural "Societies of Flora" in the eighteenth century, which were the origins of the Floraliën. See R. de Herdt and P. de Corte, *Fine fleur: Floralies gantoises & art floral*, Tielt 2005, p. 12.

5 In the bombardment of Brussels by the French Marshal Villeroy in 1695 the convent and church of the Carmelites and its artworks and archives were completely destroyed. The complex was rebuilt but demolished again in 1797 during the period of French rule. On the bombardment see L. Janssens, "'Baeckens om naer te schieten': schade aan de religieuze instellingen ten gevolge van het bombardement van 13–15 Augustus 1695," in A. Smolart-Meynart (ed.), *Rond het bombardement van Brussel van 1695: verwoesting en wederopstanding*, Brussels 1997, pp. 41–50.

6 A. Sanderus, *Chorographia sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis*, Brussels 1660. Most of the information we have on the friary as it was during the seventeenth century comes from Sanderus's description and the accompanying engraving of a bird's-eye view of the building by Lucas Vorsterman the Younger after Jacob van Werden. See De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 311, and for the engraving F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch & Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700*, 72 vols., Amsterdam, Roosendaal & Rotterdam 1949–2010, vol. 52, p. 29; vol. 42, p. 157, nr. 123.



1 Abraham Santvoort after Alexander van Fornenberg, *The high altar of the Brussels church of the Calced Carmelites during the feast of St Dorothea*, 1640, etching and burin. Brussels, Biliothèque Royale de Belgique, Printroom

ternity must have been lost in the bombardment, ruling out a full historical reconstruction. The extant sources do not allow us to pinpoint a clear occasion or motivation for the establishment of the confraternity, or why it was coupled with such a conspicuous festival, nor do they provide many clues as to why it was held in the Carmelite church. However, textual and iconographic evidence points to the councillor of state, Jan Baptist Maes or Masius, as the first provost of the confraternity and donor of the altar decorations. It seems that the confraternity was founded *ex nihilo* in 1640, with no prior tradition, relics or relation to the Carmelite order's devotions to build upon, but largely upon his instigation.[7]

In this article I shall examine the historical contexts surrounding and potential drives behind the conception of this innovative spectacle by considering the ways in which it was experienced by its beholders. Although contemporaries obviously knew that the feast was a man-made miracle, the presentation of incontestable 'evidence' underpinning a devotional celebration highlighting a miracle raises questions about the interrelations of art, religion and the emergence of the natural sciences in the period under consideration. By bringing these contexts to bear on one another I hope to show that they are not mutually exclusive, but instead that the feast functioned within a coherent social system of pious behavior. In order to illustrate this, we will first turn to the text published by Sanderus, which points to various seemingly unrelated themes that demand interpretation.

THE FEAST OF ST DOROTHEA DESCRIBED Sanderus's *Chorographia sacra Brabantiae,* which was published in 1659–63 but conceived as early as 1635, consists of a compilation of texts and images documenting the history and topography of Brabant's religious institutions, often derived directly from monastery chronicles and archival material.[8] Sanderus provides descriptions of artworks and religious feasts, and pays ample attention to local devotions and tales of miracles. A strong cultural and political agenda underlay this ambitious publishing project, as it consistently emphasizes tradition and continuity in the role of religious institutions and the historical connectedness of the church with the land and its people.[9] Given that Sanderus was well-connected and closely involved in and committed to the missionary aims of the Counter-Reformation church, I argue that his text should not simply be considered as reception of the feast, but also to some degree as its 'mission statement.'

Sanderus discusses the annual feast of St Dorothea in his section on the confraternities in the Brussels Carmelite church. It is a telling account of the effects of the ephemeral decorations on the viewer: "...here, the flower-Goddess of the Christians, patroness of gardeners and protectress of flower-lovers [*Anthophiliae*],[10] the holy virgin Dorothea, is venerated by the citizens of Brussels.

7 C. Émond, *L'Iconographie carmélitaine dans les anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux*, Brussels 1989, p. 218.

8 J. de Saint-Genois, *Antoine Sanderus et ses écrits: une page de notre histoire littéraire au XVIIe siècle*, Ghent 1861, p. 6.

9 R. Esser, *The politics of memory: the writing of partition in the seventeenth-century Low Countries*, Leiden 2012, p. 292.

Behold, when the annual feast of the saint returns: *When now the grim winter from the north shudders his wings, and the meadows whiten with hoar-frost,*[11] that spring itself *blooms*, and on the altar of Dorothea the *flowers* scent the air and smell, which *Flora* herself admires, and Brussels hardly believed until she saw it."[12]

Sanderus thus presents the festival within a classical frame of reference: although he has the pagan goddess Flora admire St Dorothea, he nevertheless stresses the Christian nature of the cult. Paraphrasing the Horatian "Ode to spring" serves to highlight how the present appearance of spring defying winter surpasses nature as well as pagan antiquity (which, in turn, evokes the conquest of death through Christ's act of salvation). The goddess thus pays homage to the saint.

Sanderus points out that he witnessed the festival in a year when Jan Baptist Masius was provost of the Dorothean sodality for the third time — 1659. "I not only believed, but *saw* how February was turned into May, [that] the sacred altar of the saint of flowers started to bloom. From the flowers of spring there was astonishment, as well as from false [flowers]. Of changing-colored silk they displayed artifice, and emulated nature; and while the eyes of the spectators, attracted by the real [flowers] wondered, they found the artificial ones, which amazed [them]."[13] He thus stresses the sensory delights of the flowers: their sight and smell triggered the curiosity of the onlookers, inviting them to marvel at the spectacle. Sanderus testifies that his experience of the feast was more than just a matter of belief. In contrast to viewing a painting, the flower festival provided actual visual proof of the 'miracle.' He describes the feast in terms of the classical *topos* of the contest between art and nature, their mutual pursuit heightening the sense of wonder and amazement.[14] This theme is further developed by citing a poet who witnessed the feast and, excited by the smell, praised it as follows. "In a peaceful duel, Nature and Art strive simultaneously with depictions of flowers, one rivaling the other, deceiving the gaze of the spectator with a false image. And [Nature] no less beautifully displays her wealth luxuriantly in this unfavorable time without deceiving the viewers. Who could count the varieties, food for the eyes, and forms? Of daffodils, violets, hyacinths, lilies, and tulips with a thousand flames and anemones of a thousand shapes."[15] The abundance of flowers is extolled in terms of the Baroque qualities of variety and contrast,[16] and equated to nature's plenitude. By presenting flowers in defiance of the winter season, the manipulation of nature made the sacred appear present. And yet this effect was achieved "without deceiving" the viewer. This last point is particularly significant, as it seems to hint at the Calvinist critique of religious images as deceiving and tricking the eye.[17] A discourse in similar Counter-Reformatory terms was sparked off by the genre of flower garland paintings, in which St Dorothea also pops up, as in a painting by Philips de Marlier dated 1640 (fig. 2).[18] It raises the ques-

10 De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 328, note 20, remarks that the leaflet accompanying the Dorothea feast in the Brussels Church of St Gorik in 1686 contains a series of poetical equivalents for the term "Anthophili": "*Bloem-lievenden*," "*Bloem-iveraers*," and "*Bloem-vrienden*" ("flower lovers," "flower zealots" and "flower-friends").

11 This is a paraphrase of Horace's "Ode to spring," *Odes*, I, iv.

12 Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 25–26: "...Christianorum hic Floram, Hortensiorum Patronam, & Anthophiliae Praesidem S. Virginem DOROTHEAM venerantur Bruxellenses. Videas hic recurrente annuo Divae natali. *Cum jam tristis hyems Aquilonis inhorruit alis, Et prata canis albicant pruinis.* ipsum *florere* ver, & in DOROTHEAE altari halare & olere *flores*, quos ipsa *Flora* miretur, ipsa, dum vidit, vix credidit Bruxella."

13 Ibid., p. 25. "Vidi hoc anno, dum *Dorotheani* hujus Collegii Princeps erat Per-illustris Dominus JOANNES BAPTISTA MASIUS; vidi, & Februarium in Majum esse mutatum tantùm non putavi, adeò floribus sacrum DIVAE altare vernabat. A veris erat hic stupor floribus: erat & à fictis. E versicolore illi facti serico artem ostentabant, aemulabantur naturam; &, dum spectantium oculi à veris allecti mirantur, inveniunt in fictis, quod stupeant."

14 Famously described in Pliny's *Natural history* in the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius.

15 Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), p. 25: "*Contendunt placidô Matura duellô / Arsque simul pictos haec, illius aemula, Florum / Illudens aciem spectantis imagine falsâ: / Necessary minùs ista suas alieno tempore bellè / Luxurians ostentat opes sine fraude tuentûm. / Quis numeret varias, oculorum pabula, formas? / Narcissos, Violas, Hyacinthos, Lilia, mille / Flammarum Tulipas, Anemônum mille figuras.*" All of the flowers named in the poem are bulb flowers, which could have been forced to bloom in early February.

16 See H. Ogden, "The principles of variety and contrast in seventeenth-century aesthetics, and Milton's poetry," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 (1949), pp. 159–82.

17 Calvinists condemned Catholic art and rituals as "covert magic or deceit of the eye." In response, the Antwerp Jesuit Joannes David explained in one of his polemical writings that "many hearts are moved by looking at images of saints, decorated churches, beautiful altars, and the properly arranged Catholic religion, which... springs from God's inner movement" ("...soo menich goedt herte beweeght wordt door het aenschouwen van de H. beelden, vercierde kercken, schoone autaren, ende wel-geschickten Godtsdienst der Catholijcken... van Godts inwendighe roeringhe komende"). See J. David, *Vry-gheleyde tot ontlastinghe van conscientie om de catholiicke kercken, ende godsdienst te gaen bekiicken*, Antwerp 1609, p. 38.

18 As argued recently in S. Merriam, *Seventeenth-century Flemish garland paintings: still life, vision, and the devotional image*, Farnham 2012.

2 Philips de Marlier, *St Dorothea in a flower garland*, 1640. Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts

tion of whether the flower festival might have also been intended to counter such charges.

Sanderus continues by quoting a chronogram, which must have been displayed on the altar indicating the author or instigator of the "*flowering* winter" and the year in which it took place, in translation: "Dorothea, Masius gathers these flowers for thee [1659]."[19] The next passage explains that he not only picked these flowers and put them on display, but that he took his "flowering devotion" a step further, for he wished to honor the saint not only by means of an ephemeral exhibition but also in a more enduring way. For this reason he donated two antependia for the altar with flower ornaments in gold embroidery, as well as liturgical vestments with gold-embroidered flower motifs for the priest and his acolytes. He thus ensured that the saint's altar would appear to be in full flower not only during his term as provost but on all her subsequent feast days. "Heaping the altars with new gifts on top, he adds ornaments that must equal the prior treasures in that place."[20]

In sum, Sanderus weaves a surprisingly coherent story around a set of themes which would not, at first sight, seem to be natural bedfellows. Ranging from poetic evocations of classically inflected humanist *topoi* (the goddess Flora, and the paragone between art and nature), to Counter-Reformatory concerns with the role of the senses in matters of belief, to competition in artistic patronage in time and space, they largely revolve around the experience of the feast by its beholders. It is not the artist who created the altarpiece, nor the Carmelites who hosted the feast in their chancel, who play a significant role in Sanderus's account, but Masius as the principal author of the floral splendor.

Should we therefore approach the flower festival primarily as an example of patronage, examining it as a way of promoting the pursuit of the patron's social distinction on the one hand and the salvation of his soul on the other? Though generally a valid frame of interpretation, I argue that this would hardly help account for the particularly sensational and experiential nature of the feast, and more specifically its capacity to captivate the beholder. The multi-layered account by Sanderus and the accents he puts on its experiential dimensions call for a methodology that takes into consideration a wide range of sources and contexts which may shed light on the festival. Not just the iconography of the altar retable or its liturgical and para-liturgical function, but also the multifarious meanings attached to and experiential dimensions derived from the ephemeral flowers and fruits that decked it.

In the following I will explore a variety of interpretative frameworks. Starting from what we know about the principal patron and his personal agenda in relation to the friary, I will proceed to examine the print depicting the feast and the miracle of the saint in the altarpiece. This will be followed by a discussion of the confraterni-

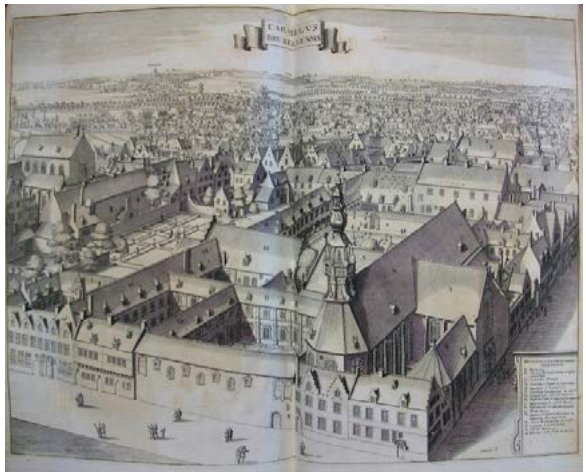
19 Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), p. 25. "Authorem *florentis* sic Brumae jam dixi, sed eumdem hoc etiam indicat Chronicon, Istos tIbI fLores, DOROTHEA, CarpIt MasIVs [= 1659]." See also J. Hilton, *Chronograms: 5000 and more in number excerpted out of various authors*, London 1882, p. 259.

20 Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), p. 26: "*Cumulatque novis Altaria donis / Insuper, & gazis aequanda prioribus addit / Ornamenta loco.*"

ty's origins, aims and activities. It will be argued that the sacred feast was rooted in a tradition of erudite botanical amateurism and collectorship, tapped into a complex of ideas and discourses, responded to a historical situation of crisis in the wake of the tulip crash of 1637, and interlinked with a global network of an advanced exchange of horticultural knowledge.

MASIUS AND THE CALCED CARMELITES The Brussels friary of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, known locally as Lieve-vrouwbroers, was a religious house with a long history traceable to its foundation in 1249 (fig. 3).[21] As a mendicant order, the Carmelites relied on private donations for the decoration of their church. Unlike the newly introduced reform orders like the Discalced Carmelites, who were often supported by the high nobility and the court, the Brussels Calced Carmelites typically counted their patrons among the patricians and the *noblesse de robe* or administrative elite.

Jan Baptist Masius (1586–1667) was a scion of a well-respected family of the robe nobility that had been dedicated to civil service for many generations. Like his father Engelbert Maes (1545–1630), who had been president of the Secret Council from 1614 until his death, Jan Baptist held important seats in the administration of the Spanish Netherlands throughout his long career. He acted as the primary official dealing with the state finances,[22] and as head of the Council of Finance was closely involved in the government's desperate attempts to defend the Spanish Netherlands in the wars against the Dutch Republic and France.[23] He thus contributed to what was perceived by the administrative elites in the south as the highest end: to protect the Catholic faith at all cost.



3 Reinier Blockhuizen after Lucas Vorsterman the Younger after Jacob van Werden, *The Brussels convent of the Calced Carmelites*, engraving, from Antonius Sanderus, *Chorographia Sacra Carmeli Bruxellensis*, Brussels 1660. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Library

In 1628 Masius was granted the honor of knighthood in the exclusive Castilian military Order of Santiago.[24] Few non-Spaniards attained this dignity, which required not only a high degree of noble ancestry but also an irreproachable Catholicity of this ancestry (*limpieza de sangre*, or cleanliness of blood). His membership thus underlined the rare quality of his family's longstanding faithfulness to Catholicism, a source of great pride. Yet it would not be granted Masius, who was his father's only son, to continue his bloodline. By 1640 it had become clear that his marriage to Anna de Blasere, daughter of a Ghent patrician, would remain without surviving children.[25] From this period on Masius must have developed

21 A mendicant contemplative order with a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Carmelites had flourished chiefly in the fourteenth century. In rivalry with other mendicant orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans, who prided themselves on being founded by prominent saints like Francis of Assisi and Dominic, the Carmelite friars traced their origins back to a pre-Christian community of hermits on Mount Carmel. There, according to tradition, their patron, the Biblical prophet Elijah, had brought back the people of Israel to the faith of their ancestors.

22 As "first commissioner of the domains and finances of the king in the Netherlands." For a long time he also held the positions of superintendent of the recruitment of His Majesty's personnel and keeper of the charter of Flanders. See H. Coppens and M. Baelde, "De Raad van Financiën," in E. Aerts *et al.* (eds.), *De centrale overheidsinstellingen van de Habsburgse Nederlanden (1482–1795)*, Brussels 1994, pp. 497–520.

23 Masius was responsible for the large-scale sale or pawning of crown domains between 1638 and 1644, as well as for the 1645 "donativo" initiated by Bishops Boonen and Triest to finance the wars against the Dutch Republic and France. See R. Vermeir, *In staat van oorlog: Filips IV en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1629–1648*, Maastricht 2001, pp. 216–17, 221, 282.

24 V. Vignau y Ballester, *Índice de pruebas de los caballeros que han vestido el hábito de Santiago desde el año 1501 hasta la fecha*, Madrid 1901, p. 204. For the Order of Santiago see R. Vermeir, "De (Zuid-) Nederlandse aristocratie en de vorming van een transnationale elite in de Spaans-Habsburgse samengestelde Staat," in M. de Koster (ed.), *Werken aan de stad: stedelijke actoren en structuren in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden 1500–1900. Liber alumnorum Catharina Lis en Hugo Soly*, Brussels 2011, pp. 291–309; L. Wright, "The military orders in sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish society: the institutional embodiment of a historical tradition," *Past and Present* 43 (1969), pp. 34–70.

25 They married on 21 October 1615. As mentioned in the dedica-

an avid concern for his salvation and that of his ancestors, in the light of the Tridentine doctrine of purgatory.[26] With his patronage Masius not only took care of his family's salvation, but also supported the reform of the Carmelites, which had only begun in 1633 and was ardently desired by the court and the ecclesiastical authorities.[27]

The high altar of the Carmelite church in Brussels formed the focal point of the chancel of the church, a prominent but contested space.[28] It fulfilled various functions at once: first of all as the centre of the divine office. In accordance with the fervent Carmelite Marian devotion, the friary church, and thus its high altar too, was consecrated to the Virgin Mary.[29] Masius' donation of a new high altar went hand in hand with the establishment in the church of the newly erected confraternity of St Dorothea, of which he was the principal or provost in 1640, 1659, and a third unknown year in between.[30] The high altar's secondary role as confraternity altar was probably limited to the feast of the saint on and around 6 February.[31] As first provost, Masius had the honor of attending to and paying for the altar's decoration by commissioning a new altarpiece and its architectural framing. As such, but also as the center of the Liturgy of the Hours, the altar performed a particular devotional function in the service of its patron, for in return for his generosity the donor probably received a patent of the Carmelite order promising the inclusion of prayers for his soul in the order's liturgy, which was considered to be a highly effective means of salvation.

THE FEAST OF 1640 DEPICTED Let us now turn to the most important visual source for the festive altar (fig. 1).[32] The remarkable and unique folio print by Abraham Santvoort after Alexander van Fornenbergh was probably created to commemorate the establishment of the confraternity, the new altarpiece and the flower festival, while highlighting its patronage by Jan Baptist Masius.[33] It shows the chancel decked with all sorts of floral deco-

tion to Anna in J. Heyndricx, *Philadelphia oft gheestelycken minnestrick*, Ghent 1627, three daughters had been born by 1627, all of whom died between then and 1640. A son died on 9 November 1636. Anne de Blasere (before 1592–1650) was 48 years old in 1640. Another publication dedicated to her was by the Ghent Dominican A. de Lallaing, *Den troost der scrupuleuse, dat is gheestelyck medicijn-boecksken, in-houdende vele troostelijcke remedien teghen de zwaergheestighe sorgelijcke sieckte der scrupuleusheyt*, Brussels 1647. Jan Baptist Maes had two sisters, Helena and Adriana (1595–1645), both of whom married members of the Antwerp bankers' family Della Faille. The children of Jean de la Faille, Baron of Nevele, and Adriana Maes would be Jan Baptist's heirs.

26 This concern would later culminate in the sumptuous rebuilding of the Maes family chapel of St Mary Magdalen in the collegiate church of St Gudula, after the chapter had authorized Masius to do so in 1649. Like his parents, Jan Baptist and his wife would find their last resting place in this domed octagonal chapel in the ambulatory built by the Brussels architect Leon van Heil the Elder in 1665 (completed 1678) as an extension to the city's most prestigious church. See P. de Ridder and A. Alexandre, *De kathedraal van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele, Brussel*, Tielt 2001; H. Velge, *La collégiale des Saints Michel & Gudule à Bruxelles*, Brussels 1925, p. 86; P. de Ridder, *Inventaris van het oud-archief van de Kapittelkerk van Sint-Michiel en Sint-Goedele te Brussel*, Brussels 1987, pp. 120, 472–74.

27 The Carmelite Reform of Touraine was strongly encouraged by the Infanta Isabella and Jacob Boonen, Archbishop of Mechelen. To the frustration of many, abuses at the Carmelite friary reverberated for a long time in Calvinist lampoons; see W. Brulez, *Correspondance de Richard Pauli-Stravius (1634–1642)*, Brussels 1955, pp. 300–01. On the Reform see S. Panzer, *Observanz und Reform in der belgischen Karmeliten-provinz, 1623–1649: "Pour parvenir à un parfait rétablissement de la discipline régulière,"* Rome 2006, and I. Rosier, *Biographisch & bibliographisch overzicht van de vroomheid in de Nederlandse Carmel van 1235 tot het midden der achttiende eeuw*, Tielt 1950, pp. 201–04.

28 It was here that Johanna, the last Duchess of Brabant (1322–1406), was buried in a magnificent Gothic tomb, and here too, in 1501, Philip the Fair knighted his one-year-old son, the future Emperor Charles V, as a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece. This aura of noble presence and Burgundian heritage was proudly proclaimed in the heraldic shields above the choir stalls. But the Revolt had not left the Carmelites unscathed. During the days of the Calvinist republic (1577–85) they had had to cede the nave of their church to the Calvinists. The friars built a wall from floor to vault separating the chancel from the rest of the church, in Sanderus's words "so as to separate piety and impiety, faith and heresy as far as possible (whilst it could not be farther)," Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), p. 11.

29 In the period under consideration the church contained three chapels and seven altars sponsored by six confraternities; ibid., p. 14.

30 Ibid., p. 26.

31 Including occasions such as funerary Masses for its deceased members, usually celebrated on 7 February, according to the statutes of the confraternity in Ghent; see M. Dewanckele, *Ontwikkeling van de bloemencultuur in de Gentse regio 1500–1900*, MA thesis, Ghent (University of Ghent) 2007, pp. 49–50.

32 Hollstein, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 23, p. 181, nr. 8.

33 According to Nora de Poorter the engraver might be Abraham Dircksz Santvoort (d. 1669), and is certainly the artist who engraved the plan of Brussels by Martin de Tailly, which was published in 1640. See De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 327; H. Hymans, "Abraham Santvoort," *Biographie nationale*, 44 vols. Brussels 1866–1986, vol. 21, pp. 379–82; Hollstein, op. cit. (note 6), vol. 23, pp. 177–88. Alexander van Fornenbergh (active 1621–63) was a gentleman artist who worked as a draughtsman, painter, restorer of paintings, actor and poet. In 1658 he published a biography of Quinten Massijs, a master who was still highly appreciated at the time. See De Poorter, cit., p. 327. On Fornenbergh see also D. Freedberg, "Fame, convention and insight on the relevance of Fornenbergh and Gerbier," *The Ringling Museum of Art Journal* 1 (1983), pp. 236–59.

rations, while tapestries on the walls depict additional scenes, partially covering the tall lancet windows.[34] In front of the altar, on which the Eucharist is exposed, noblemen (possibly members of the confraternity) and women are shown in gallant interaction. Pious women kneel in front of the altar, while children and dogs run about, observed by friars from the choir stalls.

The altar retable consisted of two painted scenes by Gaspar de Crayer, one above the other, within an architectural frame resembling a triumphal arch. Significantly, the print is a mixture of the two techniques of engraving and etching. The subtler etching technique is reserved for the two paintings depicting Dorothea's martyrdom (lower part) and glorification (upper part), while the rest of the architectural decor and figures are engraved. This combination of techniques differentiates the retable and its flower decorations from the paintings.

Some details of the elaborately decorated architectural frame command particular attention. Flower garlands are spiraling around Ionic columns, which according to architectural theories of decorum were considered appropriate for virgin saints, and were connected to the sense of smell.[35] Two arches between these columns frame vistas of fountains among lush vegetation. These may refer to the well of Elijah on Mount Carmel, where the Carmelite hermits settled, according to tradition, thus recalling the friars' origins as well as their garden-loving patron. On either side of the gable sphinxes and obelisks, typical features of contemporary garden design, and angels holding candles, wreaths and palm branches compete for the viewer's attention.[36] The obelisks are topped with cartouches containing monograms of the name Dorothea.[37] A chronogram on the banderole above the altar employs a pun on Masius's name to identify the date of construction: "sanCtae Dorotheae VIrgInI eXtrVXIt aMasIVs" meaning "A lover [Masius] of the virgin St Dorothea had it constructed in 1640."

The central painting above the altar showed St Dorothea's martyrdom, which Sanderus describes as follows: "First and foremost the high altar in the chancel, presently the sanctuary of the holy virgin and martyr Dorothea, patron saint of flower-lovers or gardeners, or even (to use a more common term) florists, contains a painting in which the saint is seen beneath the sword of her slayer, and sent from heaven a basket full of tributes of flowering spring and fragrant fruits of autumn to a certain Theophilus, who had jestingly requested it from the virgin, who during her torture, with a blushing [blooming] face, visibly directed her spirit towards heaven, which brought it. This was painted by De Crayer, citizen of Brussels famous for his brush."[38] The composition of this altarpiece, lost in the bombardment, has survived in several forms. In addition to the etching there is a drawing or preparatory sketch by De Crayer (fig. 4),[39] and a painting of his.[40] Possibly a *ricordo*, or record for the workshop,[41] the latter gives a vivid idea of the painterly quality of the original (fig. 5).[42] It shows the virgin Dorothea kneeling on a round stone base with her hands bound and sur-

34 Neither Nora de Poorter nor I have been able to identify these scenes. The tapestry on the left seems to depict a table with dinner guests raising a cup (?). On the right there is a crowned female figure, with another woman (?) holding a basket of flowers. See De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 327.

35 The Ionic order is connected to the sense of smell in a print by Hendrick Hondius after Hans Vredeman de Vries from a series of the Five Senses. My thanks to Joost vander Auwera for this observation.

36 Pagan symbols of eternity derived from classical funerary monuments, like sphinxes and obelisks, were not very customary as decorations on altars, but were typical features of contemporary garden design. See, for instance, the gardens depicted by Vredeman de Vries in P. Fuhring *et al.* (eds.), exhib. cat. *De wereld is een tuin: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de tuinkunst van de Renaissance,* Antwerp (Rubenshuis), Ghent & Amsterdam 2002.

37 This is a symbol made up of all the letters of her name, which is impossible to read and therefore probably addressed to divine rather than human eyes.

38 Sanderus, op. cit. (note 6), p. 14: "Primum summumque in Choro, nunc S. Virgini & Martyri DOROTHEAE Anthophilorum, sive Hortensiorum, aut etiam (Utrecht vulgari magis vocabulo utar) Floristarum Patronae sacrum, picturam continet, ubi Sancta haec cernitur sub ipso Carnificis gladio constituta, missum sibi è coelo ipsis floridi veris honoribus, & olentibus autumni fructibus plenum calathum, ad *Theophilum* quemdam, qui illos Virginem, inter tormenta floreo vultu conspicuam, nugabundè rogaverat, per coelicum, qui attulerat, destinans Genium. Pinxit clarus penicillo, civis Bruxellensis Crayerius."

39 Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. nr. 1950-W6. See H. Vlieghe, *Gaspar de Crayer: sa vie et ses oeuvres*, nr. A225, fig. 210; De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 328, note 21.

40 Described in nineteenth-century collections and assumed lost by Vlieghe, this painting showed up on the art market in 2003 and is presently in the collection of David Southwell, Boston, USA. See Vlieghe, op. cit. (note 39), p. 240; cat. nr. A226.

41 De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 328, note 22. Joost vander Auwera kindly suggested that the painting might be a *ricordo* on the standard format of a "dobbelen doeck."

42 The painting clearly exemplifies the qualities that Vlieghe, op. cit. (note 39), pp. 68–71, noted in De Crayer's work of the period around 1640. He observes that from 1638 his color planes are less abruptly separated and shadows are handled better, putting the accent on the fluidity of colors.

4 Gaspar de Crayer, *The martyrdom of St Dorothea*, c. 1639, ink on washed paper. Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts

5 Gaspar de Crayer, *The martyrdom of St Dorothea*, c. 1640. Boston, David Southwell Collection

rounded by onlookers. To her left are two figures on horseback amidst Roman imperial banners and standards. The rider at the front is the emperor Diocletian in a mantle trimmed with leopard fur and a miter topped by a high plume. He is handing the death warrant to the mustachioed executioner, who is wearing a turban.[43] Holding the girl by her hair the executioner raises the sword that is about to strike her bare neck. Yet Dorothea has her eyes fixed on heaven and a ghostly halo is already forming around her head. Two turbaned men in the left foreground are discussing the scene in front of them. The person in the red fur-trimmed cloak must be Theophilus, the judge's secretary, who mockingly asked Dorothea to send him some apples and roses from the garden of her bridegroom Jesus Christ.[44] Without hesitation Dorothea granted this request and just before the sword descends an angel with a basket of flowers and fruits swoops down from the sky, where the Virgin and Child are enthroned. Theophilus's gesture indicates that he now recognizes Dorothea's sanctity, before converting to Christianity and being martyred in his turn.

The upper painting is only known from the print. It shows Dorothea being glorified. Clad in a corselet and standing among clouds, she is being welcomed into heaven by the Christ Child holding a basket of flowers. Between the two paintings is a cartouche with the words "IESUS DOROTHEAE AMASIUS", stressing the perpetual bond between Dorothea and Jesus, her lover, while using the same pun on Masius's name.[45]

The architectural structure was crowned by an open

43 The way these figures are dressed stresses their otherness by evoking the contemporary image of the Turk as the archetypical non-Christian.

44 This in turn refers to Christ's appearance as a gardener after the Resurrection.

45 This must have been a temporary device, as noted by De Poorter, op. cit. (note 1), p. 315.

gable, the center of which featured Masius's blazon mounted on an enormous scallop with the cross of St James, showcasing his membership of the prestigious Spanish military Order of Santiago. On top of it a pedestal supported a sculpted image of the Christ Child, blessing and holding a globe and surrounded by a large mandorla emitting rays of light. The heraldic ensemble supporting the figure of Christ can be read as an emblem of the sustained devotion and staunch Catholicism of the patron and his ancestors, acknowledged by his knighthood and aligned with the primeval devotion of the Carmelites, who claimed to have worshipped the Christ Child ever since his Nativity.[46] Moreover, his figure can also be seen as yet another and ultimate flower motif, referring to the biblical typologies of Christ as lily of the valley and flower of the field.[47]

HORTICULTURE AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS St Dorothea's floral festivity did not appear out of the blue. The Netherlands had long been in the forefront of creating and disseminating botanical knowledge and was famed for its exquisite gardens and collections of rare botanical species.[48] Garden owners often considered themselves *savants* or *virtuosi*, and corresponded with fellow enthusiasts all over the world, sending each other seeds and cuttings of rare and exotic plants, from the New World, for example. They considered it a challenge to keep these treasures alive and went to great lengths to protect them from the cold. The continuous quest for ways of protecting precious plants from the cold winters of the Low Countries led to technological advances such as greenhouses and novel methods of grafting.

As we have seen in Sanderus's description of the flower festival, this quest was associated with the contest between art and nature, a literary *topos* which must in turn be seen against the background of traditional, medieval ideas about the restoration of the Garden of Eden and the poetical quest to recover a *ver perpetuum*: eternal spring.[49] Studying the "book of nature" was seen as a way of knowing God,[50] and as ephemeral wonders of nature and metaphorical "crowns of Creation," flowers were looked at and admired within a classical frame of references, evoking poetic eulogies.[51] Their aesthetic qualities answered to the contemporary love of variety and contrast that set particular store by the bizarre and the transformative. For the latter reasons, bulb flowers and tulips were especially coveted. The fact that tulips often unexpectedly produced flowers with flame-patterns in various colors even led to the attribution of magical and alchemical qualities to them.

The desire for rare species of tulips among elite collectors resulted in private auctions where single bulbs were sometimes sold for small fortunes. In the 1630s the dramatic gains made in this trade in the Netherlands led to a speculation bubble, known as tulip mania, which culminated in the famous tulip crash of 1637.[52] It was an event that was not confined to Dutch cities like Haarlem and Alkmaar but had repercussions in Flanders as well, especially in Brussels, a traditional centre of the trade in exotic blooms.[53] Though the tulip crash did not lead to an economic crisis, as is often assumed, it did provoke public commotion, expressed in many satirical pamphlets and

46 Since the Carmelites claimed to predate Christianity they considered themselves early converts. They believed that the Holy Family had stopped by the hermits of Mount Carmel on the flight into Egypt.

47 Song of Solomon 2:2.

48 See H. Cook, "Handel in kennis: natuurlijke historie als de 'big science' van de zeventiende eeuw," in E. van Gelder and F. van Heertum (eds.), *Bloeiende kennis: groene ontdekkingen in de Gouden Eeuw*, Hilversum 2012, pp. 23–34, and W. Backer, exhib. cat. *De botanica in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (einde 15de eeuw-ca. 1650)*, Antwerp (Museum Plantin-Moretus) 1993.

49 By reassembling the different species of flora, scattered as a result of the Fall. See J. Prest, *The Garden of Eden: the botanic garden and the re-creation of paradise*, New Haven 1981; C. Lauterbach, *Gärten der Musen und Grazien: Mensch und Natur im Niederländischen Humanistengarten 1522–1655*, Munich 2004, pp. 222–30; L. Wuyts, "Des fleurs pour la foi, l'amour et la mort," in S. van Sprang (ed.), *L'Empire de Flore: histoire et représentation des fleurs en Europe du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, Brussels 1996, pp. 221–23. This should be seen in the wider context of the Renaissance idea of a return of the Golden Age, on which see H. Levin, *The myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, New York 1969.

50 See E. Jorink, *Reading the book of nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715*, Leiden 2010.

51 C. Swan, "Les fleurs comme 'curiosa'," in Van Sprang, op. cit. (note 49), pp. 86–99.

52 See A. Goldgar, "Tulpenmanie: wie bepaalt de waarde van de tulp?," in Gelder and Heertum, op. cit. (note 48), pp. 63–73; idem, *Tulipmania: money, honor, and knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age*, Chicago 2007; M. Dash, *Tulipomania: the story of the world's most coveted flower and the extraordinary passions it aroused*, London 1999; W. Kuitert, "La fleur, objet de spéculation au XVIIe siècle: la tulipomanie," in Van Sprang, op. cit. (note 49), pp. 100–14; E. Krelage, *Bloemenspeculatie in Nederland: de Tulpomanie van 1636-'37 en de hyacintenhandel 1720-'36*, Amsterdam 1942.

53 Goldgar, *Tulipmania*, cit. (note 52). Tulip markets were also held around 6 February in the Dutch Republic.


Trooſt-Brief,
AEN ALLE
Bedroefde Bloemmiſten/
die treuren over 't ſterven oft 't overlijden
VAN
FLORA,
Godinne der Floriſten.
TOT HAERLEM.
Gedruct by Hans Paſſchiers van Weſbuſch, Boeck-
bruchen op 't Marckt-veldt, inden deliagen Bybel/ 1637.
coll NEHA

6 Satirical pamphlet on the tulip mania, *Letter to comfort all sad florists who mourn the death or decease of Flora, goddess of florists*, Haarlem 1637. Collection of the Netherlands Economic History Archive, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

7 Jan Breughel the Younger, *Satire on the tulip mania*, 1640. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum

songs (fig. 6). Pamphlets from the north mock the former worshippers of the "false idol" of the goddess Flora, and hinge on a sense of guilt about the sin of greed.[54] The tulip crash and its backlash also spawned moralizing amusement in the Spanish Netherlands, as can be seen from Jan Breugel the Younger's *Satire on tulip mania* of c. 1640, a typical *singerie* or monkey piece ridiculing various characters involved in the tulip trade (fig. 7).

It is hardly surprising that the crash created bad blood among the small circle of wealthy flower collectors. According to the "Dutch gardener" Hendrik van Oosten, who published a gardening manual in 1703 that was translated into English in 1711, the crash of 1637 caused considerable mistrust at private sales in Flanders too. "...because this could not be done without Animosities, thereupon the *Flemish* Florists erected a Fraternity in the Cities; and took St. *Dorothea* to be their Patroness, and the *Syndicus* to be Judge of the Differences, that might arise by their Trucking [fraud]; and he to add more Authority to it, called in four of the Chief of the Brother-hood, and this was the Occasion of the sweet Conversation of the Brothers, and brought them into great Esteem. The *Dutch* keep in this Matter another Rule; they meet together on a certain Day, when Tulips are in their full Bloom, and choose, after having seen the chief Gardens of the Florists, and taken a friendly and frugal dinner together, one of the Company to be Judge of the Differences that might arise about Flowers in that Year."[55]

The first sodalities of St Dorothea thus emerged in the wake of conflict and crisis, and van Oosten suggests that they were set up as forums to prevent or settle economic disputes. Masius, as a jurist and public dignitary in charge of the state finances, was presumably an outstanding candidate to act as a judge in conflicts regarding private flower sales amongst amateurs.

What kind of activities did the members of a Dorothea sodality undertake? In the case of Brussels not much information has survived, but we do have detailed accounts of the activities of the confraternities of Ghent and Bruges, which are likely to have been modeled on the one in Brussels.[56] They were both closed sodalities for the elite, limited to a maximum of 12 (male) mem-

54 See E.H. Krelage, *De pamfletten van den tulpenwindhandel, 1636–1637*, The Hague 1942.

55 H. van Oosten, *The Dutch gardener: or, the compleat florist*, London 1711, p. 161.

56 A. Vandewalle, "De bloemlievende Broederschap van de H. Dorothea te Brugge 1651–1784," *Het Brugse Ommeland* 4 (1979), pp. 259–66; idem, "Hoogstaande bloemenliefhebbers in het Brugse, 1651–1784," *Biekorf* 80 (1980), pp. 89–92; A. Vandewalle and W. le Loup, "Ongekend werk van Jan Garemijn in het confrerieboek van de H. Dorothea," *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 117 (1980), pp. 179–87. See also Andries van den Abeele, "Andries van den Bogaerde (1726–1799): politiek, botanica en grootgrondbezit in Brugge

bers, recruited by invitation only.[57] The members came together twice a year: first on the saint's feast day in February, when the altar was decorated with flowers and the members attended Mass, after which they elected a new board. A copious banquet would follow. The Dorotheans met again in May to visit each other's gardens, from each of which they picked the two most beautiful flowers they could find. These flowers were subsequently auctioned at another festive banquet. There was often an element of competition,[58] and in Ghent a jury of four was appointed by the city's aldermen to decide in conflicts regarding the flower trade and cultivation.[59] In Antwerp the establishment of a confraternity of St Dorothea in 1641 even led to the staging of a play with songs, *Dorothea maghet ende martelersse*, based on the life of the saint and performed by the youth of the parish of St George (fig. 8). It was probably written by the parish priest, Guilelmus Bolognino (1590–1669), a fanatical anti-Protestant writer and composer.[60]

Later in the century similar confraternities were founded in the same cities, probably to cater to different, less elitist groups of florists and gardeners or to accommodate those who were not admitted to the closed sodalities.[61] What they all shared was the tradition of decorating their altars with flowers on 6 February and publishing devotional broadsheets for the occasion.[62] The activities of the Dorothea confraternities thus revolved around interrelated aspects of an amateur hobby, corporatism, mediation of conflicts, sociability and social distinction, charity and public displays of devotion.

The latter aspect distinguished the confraternities in the south from their northern counterparts. By organizing a sacred festival, members of the confraternity publicly presented themselves as subscribing to a pious model. The narrative of St Dorothea and Theophilus provided a way of cooling the discords that might arise from the flower trade. De Crayer's prominent depiction of the figure of Theophilus, described in the *Golden legend* as a "judge's secretary," in other words a lawyer or *notario*,[63]


DOROTHEA
Maeghet ende Martelersse,
Speelwijs Verthoont
Door de Ionckheyt van de Parochie van
S. IORIS.
Met verscheyde Gheestelijcke Liedekens/
ende een van S. Dorothea.
TOE-GHE-EYGENT
Aen den seer Wijsen, Voorsinnighen ende Wel-gheleerden
HEER
VN HEER IAQVES VAN EYCK Schepen deser Stadt van Antwerpen, ende Deken van de Edele ende seer treffelijcke Confrerie van de selve H. DOROTHEA.
t'ANTWERPEN,
By Jacob Wesens/ op de Lombaerde veste/ inden gulden Bybel/ Anno 1641.
8° Ytk 66553.

8 Title page of the play *Dorothea Maeghet ende Martelersse*, Antwerp 1641. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

en omgeving tijdens de 18de eeuw," *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge* 139 (2002), pp. 80–124.

57 B. Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 114–16.

58 D. Tarver and B. Elliott, "Des fleuristes aux sociétés horticoles: histoire des expositions florales," in Van Sprang, op. cit. (note 49), pp. 115–47.

59 Dewanckele, op. cit. (note 31), p. 50.

60 The play was dedicated to Alderman Jacob van Eyck, dean of the confraternity; see I. de Cooman, "Van podium naar liedboek: Guilelmus Bolognino en de toneelliederen in 'Dorothea maeghet ende martelersse' (1641)," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 19 (2003), pp. 212–25.

61 Similar confraternities of St Dorothea were established in other churches in Brussels: in the Kapellekerk (*actum,* 17 September 1658; statutes, 7 February 1661; authorized by Archbishop Andreas Creusen and confirmed by Pope Alexander VII in 1664), and in the Church of St Gorik. The former was a closed society consisting of around 12 high-ranking members. The latter was probably more open and served a more middle-class social stratum, as its provost was the printer Gilles Strykwant.

62 Two such publications have survived: "Winter-lente-bloemen. Toe-geheylight aen de onverwinnelyckste Christi martelaresse, uyt-muntenste ende heylighste *maeghden-bloem* DOROTHEA, Door de *bloem-lievende* haren feest-dagh vierende binnen de Princelycke Stadt Brussel, in de parochiale kercke van den HEYLIGHEN GAUGERICUS. Op den sesden Februarii 1686... , Tot Brussel, by Gielis Stryckwant;" and "Lof-galmende rym-dicht ofte trophé der bloemen op-gerecht ter eeren vande heylige maghet ende martelaeresse Dorothea in de parochiale kercke van Onse Lieve Vrouwe ter Cappelle binnen de princelycke stadt Brussel, op den sesden februarii 1734."

63 Theophilus also features more prominently as the addressee of a fictive letter by St Dorothea published in 1640 by the Lille Jesuit Jean Vincart, and is depicted in the accompanying emblematic *symbolum*; see J. Vincart, *Sacrarum heroidum epistolae*, Tournai 1640, pp. 36–44.

drew attention to his twofold example. He redeemed himself for his initial arrogance towards the saint by converting after witnessing the miracle, and sacrificed himself to Christ.

ORANGES: THE FRUIT OF PROMISE All the same, this does not explain the origins of the idea of mounting a conspicuous floral festival in the middle of winter. The answer may lie in the horticultural network of Masius and his close relatives, who maintained contacts with a circle of prominent horticulturalists around the papal court in Rome, which was based on a shared interest in the cultivation of orange trees. Like tulips, these were among the most costly and highly regarded plants, and enjoyed similarly high-minded connotations. Prized as the "fruit of promise" of classical Hesperidean myths, citrus fruits evoked images of paradise, eternal life and salvation. Moreover, they held the distinctive feature of bearing blossom and fruit at the same time, making them the ideal attribute of the Virgin Mary, and because of her basket of flowers and fruits of St Dorothea as well.[64] Incapable of surviving frost, citrus trees were necessarily cultivated in tubs so that they could be moved to indoor orangeries in winter.

In Brussels, Masius and his wife lived in the house he inherited from his father in 1630, close to the Carmelite friary.[65] It included a large and magnificent garden with tubs, balusters and porticoes in blue stone, as well as a "grande sale orangere au jardin," a beautiful and large orangery equipped with a boiler.[66] On 28 January 1640, shortly before the first feast of St Dorothea, Masius obtained the exclusive right to have a private water junction tapping into the city's newly created water mains, so as to supply his garden and its fountains.[67] He shared his interest in horticulture with his brother-in-law, the Ghent alderman Willem de Blasere (before 1592–1653), who was a pioneer in the construction of greenhouses. As one of the first in the Low Countries he had built a heated and fenestrated winter garden 75 meters long in the garden of his castle of Hellebuys in Afsnee in East Flanders.[68]

Word of these developments also reached horticultural circles in Rome, where members of the emerging scientific community did research in the magnificent gardens of their patrons.[69] Giovan Battista Ferrari (1583–1655), a learned Jesuit and horticultural advisor to the Barberini family, published a sumptuous, encyclopedic book on all sorts of citrus fruits, the *Hesperides*, in 1646.[70] This ultimate example of the contemporary notion of gardens as *loci* of curiosity[71] was based on the collected notes and correspondence of the erudite Cassiano del Pozzo (1588–1657),[72] with whom Ferrari collaborated closely in the famous Accademia dei Lincei.[73] Their wide-ranging network included Willem de Blasere (fig. 9), who is credited in the book with important achievements in the field of cultivating oranges.[74] Ferrari recounts how "by diligence, these rare trees have been brought up there [the Spanish Netherlands] despite nature's opposition.... We should admire Willem de Blasere... even more, since... he imported orange trees from Italy, and also grew his own plants from seeds,... and succeeded, by means of grafting, in improving them and adjusting them to the cold weather of the Netherlands.... In October, he brings his

64 Y. Doosry, "Die goldenen Äpfel der Hesperiden: antike Mythen und ihre bildlichen Spuren," in Y. Doosry, C. Lauterbach and J. Pommeranz (eds.), exhib. cat. *Die Frucht der Verheißung: Zitrusfrüchte in Kunst und Kultur*, Nuremberg (Germanisches Nationalmuseum) 2011, pp. 27–67.

65 A. Vanrie and A. Buyle, "Van herenhuis de Limminghe tot zetel van het Brussels Parlement (1700–1996)," in *De zetel van het Brussels Parlement: historische studie, 1700–2000*, Brussels 2000, p. 9.

66 Ibid., p. 10.

67 Ibid., pp. 12–13.

68 R. de Herdt, "Les Floralies gantoises: un modèle prestigieux," in Van Sprang, op. cit. (note 49), p. 138; see also idem, *Gentse Floraliën: sierteelt in Vlaanderen*, Ghent 1990; R. Matthijs, *Iconografie van bisschop Triest*, Ghent 1939, p. 33.

69 See D. Freedberg, *The eye of the lynx: Galileo, his friends, and the beginnings of modern natural history*, Chicago 2002.

70 G.B. Ferrari, *Hesperides sive de malorum aureorum cultura et usu libri quatuor*, Rome 1646. The book was compiled between 1635 and 1640. See D. Freedberg, "Cassiano, Ferrari and their drawings of citrus fruit," in D. Freedberg and E. Baldini (eds.), *Citrus fruit: the paper museum of Cassiano Dal Pozzo. A catalogue raisonné: series B - natural history, part one*, London 1997, pp. 45–83, esp. pp. 50–57.

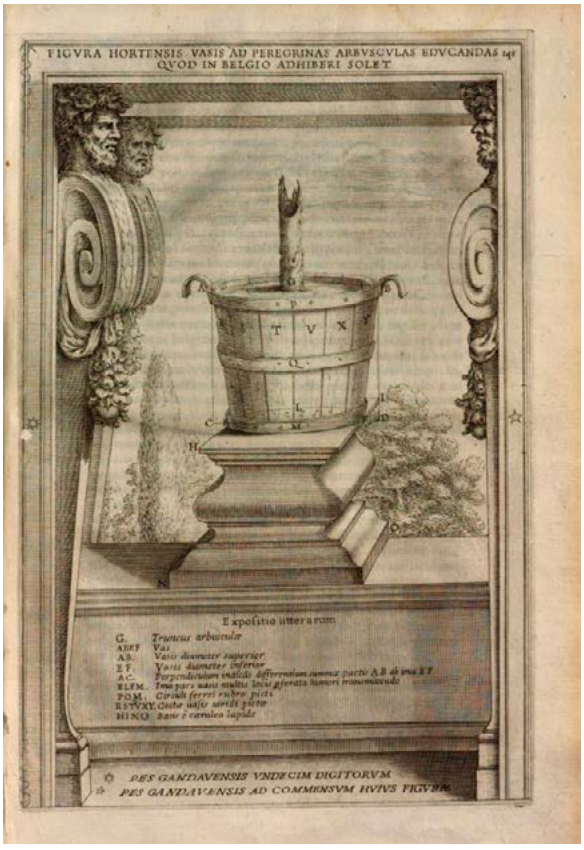
71 Taking its lead from the approach to natural history of Ulisse Aldrovandi, it combined literature, art, mythology, etymology, ethnography and botany in a way that had never been done before; see Freedberg, op. cit. (note 70), p. 60.

72 See F. Solinas, *I segreti di un collezionista: le straordinarie raccolte di Cassiano dal Pozzo 1588–1657*, Rome 2001.

73 Freedberg, op. cit. (note 70); see also D. Freedberg, "From Hebrew and gardens to oranges and lemons," in F. Solinas (ed.), *Cassiano dal Pozzo: atti del seminario internazionale di studi*, Rome 1989, pp. 37–72. On the Accademia dei Lincei see I. Baldriga, *L'occhio della Lince: i primi Lincei tra arte, scienza e collezionismo (1603–1630)*, Rome 2002.

74 B. and M. Bachès, "La culture des agrumes," *Homme et Plantes* 37 (2001), p. 34.

9 Crispijn van de Passe the Younger, *Portrait medallion of Willem de Blasere*, engraving, 1633. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



10 Willem de Blasere's invention of a tub for orange trees, from Giovanni Baptista Ferrari, *Hesperides, sive de malorum aureorum cultura et usu libri quatuor*, Rome 1646, bk. 2, p. 141

trees to the winter garden, and when it starts to freeze, this greenhouse is gently heated with coal from Liège."[75]

The book also contains an illustration of the tubs in which de Blasere used to grow his orange trees (fig. 10). With a typical rhetorical flourish, Ferrari concludes by noting that de Blasere had "thus turned his delicate and haughty Italian guests into... plain Netherlandish daughters."

The 1640 print of the chancel during the feast of St Dorothea not only shows fountains but also two pots with fruit-bearing orange trees on the balusters on either side of the steps to the altar, so Masius had apparently acquired his brother-in-law's knowledge about cultivating oranges in the cold north, and did not fail to display this achievement prominently at the feast of his newly created confraternity (fig. 1). It comes as no surprise that in 1647 Willem de Blasere and his fellow garden enthusiast Antonius Triest, Bishop of Ghent, famous for the gardens of his Belvedere villa, erected a parallel confraternity of St Dorothea in St Michael's church in Ghent.[76]

CONCLUSION The establishment of elite horticultural societies in both the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands arose from their members' mutual inter-

75 G.B. Ferrari, op. cit. (note 70), pp. 139–41.

76 M. Cloet, *Het bisdom Gent (1559–1991): vier eeuwen geschiedenis*, Ghent 1991, p. 75; Matthijs, op. cit. (note 68), pp. 33–34; Dewanckele, op. cit. (note 31), pp. 44–53.

est in cultivating and trading in flowers, and responded to the need to resolve conflicts in the wake of the tulip crash. The institution founded in Brussels by Masius in 1640 explicitly presented itself as a religious confraternity devoted to St Dorothea. The association of gardening culture in the Catholic south with St Dorothea served to affirm the cult of saints and the legitimate practice of venerating their images as sanctioned by the Council of Trent. The annual flower exhibition in Brussels and the print depicting it did so in no uncertain terms: honoring the saint by sensationally staging her miracle through horticultural artifice.

Masius repeatedly took the lead with his patronage of the altar retable, on which he proudly displayed the insignia of the Order of Santiago, underlining the nobility and impeccable Catholicity of his ancestry. Prompting prayers for the Masius family, the heraldic ensemble crowned by the figure of the Christ Child proclaimed his devotion to St Dorothea and Christ, while bringing his family's long-standing Catholic heritage to bear on the pretended pre-Christian pedigree of the Carmelite order, with which they shared this devotion. Yet as the eyewitness account of Sanderus indicates, the unique character and appeal of the flower festival derived from playing on the viewer's curiosity. Juxtaposing artificial and real flowers incited wonder, challenging the viewer to contemplate the relationships between art and nature, illusion and reality, faith and the senses. As an evocation of the classical *topos* of the rivalry between art and nature, the flower festival showed nature tamed and emulated by art, while artworks were adorned by nature.

These interpretations are not mutually exclusive. In seventeenth-century Flanders, the cultivation of flowers was no disinterested hobby, and religious patronage even less so. The extraordinary value attached to marvels of nature, such as tulips and oranges, and the lively inquisitiveness to explore the boundaries of that same nature, was coupled with an equally high esteem for steadfastness in the faith. Following up on the horticultural inventions of his brother-in-law Willem de Blasere, Masius was able to produce flourishing and fruit-bearing oranges in winter. Both epitomizing the contest between art and nature, and evoking St Dorothea's miracle of receiving flowers in mid-winter, they indicated the reward for unshakable faith: eternal spring. This promise was not only represented in the paintings; it was effectively made present by repeating the miraculous event in the here and now. This, I assume, was the key to the success of the feast in Brussels and the reason why it was so widely imitated in the Spanish Netherlands. As truly present images of paradise, flowers and oranges surpassed the potential of art.

DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH HISTORY
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN